

Stanford University Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 2, 2021
Stanford, California, USA

Coach David Shaw Postgame Media Conference



Stanford 31, Oregon 24

DAVID SHAW: So much to say. Obviously this was a heck of a football game, two really good teams. We've been close, trying to get to where we're playing at our best. Still haven't played a complete football game. Showed a lot of signs.

Told the guys in the locker room, you don't always get what you want, right, like the Rolling Stones say, but sometimes you get what you need.

I think we needed that. We needed to be ahead and fight through adversity and find a way to win against a really good football team.

Can't say enough about our crowd, our fans, our student section, the alumni. Got some juice from the '70 and '71 Rose Bowl teams. Heisman Trophy winner, All-American, first-round draft pick Jim Plunkett gave the guys juice on Friday.

Guys in the locker room, so much resilience. They're all hurting still for Brycen Tremayne. But it wasn't just on our side; both sides lost some really good football players. Got guys hurt in a very physical game.

Proud of our guys. They were able to find a way back. We needed that, that feeling, because that's the feeling that Oregon has, that they've earned. They've been down, and they had so much confidence, they can go back and win. It was great for our guys to be down and have that questioned and to come back and win. It was great.

I was pretty animated on the sidelines a couple times. I do believe the game was officiated well. There are some conversations I think we need to have, speaking as the head coach at Stanford but also as the guy who leads the rules committee for the NCAA. The definition of disconcerting signals, what constitutes that foul, those are the conversations that we were trying to have. We've never jumped offsides so much in a game.

That I think needs to be talked about. It'll be talked about behind closed doors, so don't expect me to give you any answers. But that's what I was animated about on the sidelines a couple times. I think we have to clarify that rule.

Besides that, can't say enough about our young quarterback. Did not play perfectly, did not play his best game, but doggone it, he is special. He is special.

Offensive line against a very, very good front, we won some battles, we lost some battles, but when we needed it at the end of the game, pass protection was awesome. Awesome.

We got a foul on the quarterback, Tanner had to come out, get checked out, come back in, and from then on it was great.

Can't say enough about the resilience of our guys in all three phases. Still not a perfect game for us. That's our challenge next week. We have a short week against an extremely good Arizona State team. We have to get rest and recuperate and see who's healthy, just find a way to get back next Friday night and play hopefully our best game of the year.

Questions?

Q. Can you talk about sort of articulate the emotional swings of that game, to have the lead at halftime, to be very ineffective most of the second half and then rally the way you did, what was that overtime like? What was the locker room like sort of emotionally?

DAVID SHAW: First of all, I apologize to my parents, everybody over the age of 70. So sorry for you all. The ups and downs and -- it was hard. It was hard because we played so well at the beginning and should have had more points, and then to see a really good team storm back and be down again.

But the key word, resilience, that's the mark of a successful team. It's a mark of a successful person. How can you withstand the storms that life gives you? How can you



withstand the difficulties that a game presents? Our guys took it on the chin quite a bit, but then we fought back and made some big plays.

John Humphreys, first of many touchdowns; Elijah Higgins, can't say enough about his way to battle back through a lot of difficulty; Ben Yurosek coming in and making some big plays, as well. Austin Jones, needed Austin Jones back, came back and made a big play. Isaiah Sanders missed most of last game, came back healthy this week, got a touchdown for us. The guys up front against a really, really good defensive front at Oregon I thought played great, really really battled. You're going to lose some plays against those guys, but our guys came back and fought.

Q. What is it about Tanner that allows him to thrive in those pressure situations down at the end?

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, that's one of those things that we take zero credit for. That's what he brings to the table as a person. That's his upbringing. It's a combination of nature and nurture. He's a positive, positive human being. Things are going great, he's positive. Things are going bad, he's positive, and the guys feed off of that. It's not for show, it's genuine; it's just who he is. His ability to stay calm but still be excited, that's infectious on our offense.

Q. I wanted to ask you about those last two drives. Once you had those consecutive false starts, you guys had zero total yards of offense in the second half. How did you gurn it around so quickly and score a touchdown on that drive and score another one in overtime?

DAVID SHAW: Well, rewinding my comments from a few minutes ago, I'm saying just enough not to get fined or get in trouble. But when the defense is shouting signals while the quarterback is in his cadence, that's what we need to talk about. I could be dead wrong. Maybe those things aren't going to get called or they're not going to get called, and everybody in the league, everybody in college football should do it, should do it every single snap. That's tough. That's tough.

Would love to tell our guys not to jump. We jumped. We jumped when they made their calls. So that's something that I think we just need to talk about.

Once again, when we had to make plays, our guys went out there and made plays. Got it into overtime, and then to win it in overtime, those are just big plays by some great football players.

Q. What did you like calling the fades end of regulation, you get a couple to John and then

obviously the one that tied the game, especially with Brycen out? What made you think that would be a good one?

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, those that have watched Stanford football over the last 15 years since we came here with Coach Harbaugh and I was the offensive coordinator and when I took over, J.J. Arcega-Whiteside, Coby Fleener, Zach Ertz, Levine Toilolo, we've had a lot of guys go up and get the ball. Brycen Tremayne is right up with the best of them. John Humphreys is going to be right up there with the best of them. Elijah Higgins, right up there with the best of them.

Across the board, we've got two 6'5" tight ends, a 6'5" receiver, 6'4" receiver and a 6'3½" receiver who's 235 pounds. We're going to test people outside. We're going to test people outside.

If we don't make one, guess what, we're going to come back and do it again. I have that much faith and confidence in those guys, and we work on it all the time, and it's great to see those things pay off for us.

Q. Can you take us through the day defensively, the first half, much of the second half and what it took to finally finish it out?

DAVID SHAW: Well, I don't know what the stats say. I'm not really worried about the stats. I thought this was possibly our best defensive game. There's going to be a lot of rush yards out there, but I'm talking about the way we played in the first half was awesome. These guys are good. They're big up front. They run the ball. They've got two outstanding running backs and a running quarterback.

It's very, very difficult, and we got some big-time stops. We got some tackle for losses, we got some negative plays. We took the lead and kept the lead and extended the lead, and we could only do that because we got defensive stops. That was big time.

Second half, it was more the offense than the defense. You give this offense this many opportunities, they're going to eventually score. They're eventually going to go down the field. The sputtering offense is really what kept the defense out there too long. I thought Coach Anderson and his staff put together one heck of a plan.

There's a principle I have, I've said this before and I truly believe it, that you're still a freshman until you play 12 games. So who did I just describe? All four of our inside linebackers. None of them have played 12 games yet. They're still getting better. There's experience upon experience upon experience. John Humphreys hasn't

played 12 games yet. Part of our secondary that rotated in hasn't played 12 games yet. None of our tight ends really outside of Tucker have really played 12 games yet.

So we've got a group of guys, the meat of our football team, they're still kind of in their freshman year in my opinion, so I'm hoping by the time we get to mid-season and beyond, all of these reps, all of these practice reps, all these game reps are going to start to compound, and I think we're going to see cleaner, better play by all those guys.

Q. How much of a factor was Tremayne's injury in the offensive struggles in the second half, and how impactful will that be if he's out for a while?

DAVID SHAW: It'll be impactful because I think he was on his way to being one of the best receivers in America, and we'll see how bad it is, and if he comes back next year, I would anticipate him being on that path again.

The catches he makes in the end zone, I don't know if there's anybody better in America inside the 15-yard line. He's phenomenal. That really didn't have much to do with our struggles. It was hard, it was difficult. When we scored on that drive, the difficulty was just the false starts, the negative plays, and this is a rhythm defense. They get you and then they blitz you and they blitz you and then you have to block No. 5, you have to block No. 1, you've got to block all these guys, and it became difficult. We didn't establish anything. We didn't get anything going offensively.

But it wasn't Brycen Tremayne being out. We lost Bryce Farrell for little bit there, also. But we have so much confidence in our guys, we just put our tight ends back out there, and we got more guys coming.

I think our staff has recruited extremely well. That's what we talked about at the beginning of the year. Two years ago when we were really, really low and not deep, that's when we made some tough decisions to build the depth of this football team, so when guys get hurt, hey, we roll guys out there and we keep playing.

Q. Could you talk about the 10-0 start you guys got off to? Last week it was kind of the opposite; you guys got off to a slow start, then the second half. What was the key to getting off to a much better first half start this week do you feel?

DAVID SHAW: I wish I knew. I wish I could bottle it up because I would do it every week. I think the magnitude of the game helped a bunch. I think we did some good things this week to keep our guys fresh. The fact that it wasn't too

early but it was an early start, we just got to get up and go this morning, that may have helped.

So I give a lot of credit to the guys, the leadership on this football team, the way they put pressure on themselves and put pressure on each other. We talked about it all week; we just have to start fast.

UCLA we spotted them 14 points before we started playing in the second quarter, and we can't do that to a good football team.

I talked about it on Tuesday with the team, told them flat out, are you guys going to be surprised when we're up two scores early in this game? And they said no. We were up two scores. But that other team battled back, and thankfully we made the last surge.

Q. When Tanner McKee went out, were you concerned he wouldn't make it back, and then what was the process going through with the medical staff and getting him back in the game?

DAVID SHAW: Hey, I don't talk to the medical staff, they come and talk to me. Once he was out, I was imagining he was out. I knew what plays Jack West likes. We keep a list of the plays that our quarterbacks like. We were in the two-minute drill, so I knew we were going to some certain plays versus their coverages, plays that Jack knows extremely well, so I didn't bat an eyelash. We put Jack out there and run the plays that we need to run.

Q. Short week now with the plane ride thrown in there for good measure. Given that, how long do you celebrate this one before you have to start turning your attention to A State?

DAVID SHAW: If you're asking me, I'm done. I'm watching Arizona State tonight. I told the guys the next 48 hours are big for us. Guys played a lot of snaps tonight, they've got to get off their feet. Sunday they've got to come in and get treatment, they've got to rest. Monday is a modified Monday for us because we have to get some good work in, but we're going to cut that down. Tuesday we're going to cut that down. So Monday and Tuesday will be highly modified for us, slightly physical, mostly mental, and then we'll have a walk-through day and we'll get on a plane.

Really, really tough long physical game today, so the most important thing is our guys getting their legs back so we can go play next Friday night.

Q. Can you talk about what you saw from Gabe Reid today?

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, Gabe is having his best season. I don't know if that'll bear out statistically, but the wisdom, the age, the experience, it really shows. He's playing great, giving great energy. We've needed his leadership.

I think he and Stephen Herron and Jordan Fox, got all three of those guys played a lot of snaps on the outside offensive linebacker position. They've all had their days where they've played great. Really appreciate those guys and in particular Gabe with his experience helping that group out.

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